

The LENINIST

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USSR needs political revolution After 70 Years

TODAY, 70 years after the October Revolution, comrade Mikhail Gorbachev says he is carrying out a political revolution. The Soviet Union is certainly in need of reorganisation and openness. We have long advocated this and been attacked for it. During the Brezhnev years the economy stagnated and the sordid corruption in the highest ranks became an open secret. Brezhnev is rightly criticised. The Soviet Union cannot afford sponging bureaucrats and their mismanagement. Socialism cannot stay still. The existence of a world economy makes that impossible. All countries, whatever their system, are interlinked and interdependent.

The world needs socialism. Imperialism is a system of merciless exploitation causing the relative and absolute impoverishment of backward countries, a system of ecological disaster, malnutrition, disease, unemployment and pauperisation. The working class will fight for socialism not just in this or that country. For socialism to show its full potential it must operate on a planet wide basis. A World Union of Socialist Republics will rationally plan the world economy and enable mankind to liberate the forces of production. The kingdom of necessity will be left behind and the world will enter the kingdom of freedom and all will enjoy a material abundance on a scale unimaginable today.

Imperialism is clearly a moribund system. But it still dominates the world economy. And as its internal contradictions become ever more antagonistic, it tries to save itself through redivisionist war in order to gain new markets, new areas to rob and exploit. Imperialism is war. All imperialism can guarantee is economic decay, a World War III holocaust and the poverty of a nuclear winter, a new dark age. So imperialism and living socialism can only co-exist on a temporary basis; in the end one or the other must triumph.

Only through further revolutions, especially in the advanced countries, can socialism be made irreversible. In the meantime living socialism must make enormous sacrifices to defend itself against imperialist warmongering. In the 1970s the Soviet Union achieved, to the detriment of its economy, something approaching nuclear parity with the US. This strengthened the cause of peace. But, under the god fearing Carter, the US rejected MAD (mutually assured destruction) and returned to strategies seeking outright victory. The go-ahead was given for a whole range of first strike silo-busting weapons systems.

Reagan carried on where Carter left off, and has done more be-

sides. Looking at his all time high military budgets, the spine chilling Star Wars plans, who can deny that the US is laying the basis for a World War III winning first strike capability?

The natural reaction among the Soviet top brass was to demand the high tech hardware to match the Americans. The Gorbachev leadership insisted that the sagging Soviet economy was in no position to supply such equipment and a number of dissenting generals have been unceremoniously sacked to reinforce the point.

In relative terms, militarily but above all economically, the Soviet Union has certainly been declining since the mid-1970s. Indeed, as a result, according to Gorbachev himself, the Soviet Union was by the 1980s in a pre-crisis situation.

Of course, the sycophants of the Soviet Union say Gorbachev's reforms are the result of socialism's growing maturity and the shift of the world balance of forces against imperialism. This has nothing to do with the scientific Marxist-Leninist method. It is wishful thinking. Facts are facts. No matter how demanding, we must base our practice on the truth.

Against the US orchestrated imperialist war drive the leadership in the Soviet Union has felt compelled to retreat abroad and reform at home. At the CPSU 27th Congress Gorbachev offered the US cooperation in cooling the temperature in so-called hot spots — presumably countries like Nicaragua, South Africa and Afghanistan. We who take world revolution as our starting point must openly and frankly say this is not just an example of retreat, it is appeasing imperialism. This is full of dangers.

Gorbachev's appeasement of imperialism has been greeted by a cross class chorus of approval and so have his domestic reforms. The ruling circles in the main Nato countries (e.g the Institute of East-West Security Studies) have been joined by the opportunists ranging from the centrist New Communist Party to the right Euro Marxism Today in supporting *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

Genuine communists must stand against this stream and tell the truth. Gorbachev's appeasement of imperialism only encourages its aggression; *glasnost* and *perestroika* are not a political revolution.

This is not to say there cannot be a political revolution under socialism or that there should not be one. The socialist revolution in a particular country is a step towards world communism. Communism which is stateless and classless will not result spontaneously. Only the conscious class

struggle of the proletariat under socialism can liberate society's productive forces, merge all other classes into itself and overcome all vestiges of bourgeois/capitalist society like the state, the law of value and commodity production. Socialism is not an end in itself. It is not a distinct mode of production. It is a transitional form of society containing elements of capitalism and communism.

Immediately after the revolution the working class exercises its dictatorship over a capitalist economy and because of a lack of culture, experience, expertise etc it cannot rule directly. This is inevitable but it is greatly reinforced by the fact that socialism emerges at first not in the most advanced capitalist countries but in weak links which tend to be very backward in socio-economic terms. The society which operates on the principle from each according to ones ability, to each according to ones needs, will not be realised until the working class runs all aspects of society. This itself involves a drawn out struggle against bureaucracy and in turn raises the question of political revolution.

Even in a Britain or Japan, working class power will have to be exercised indirectly through a bureaucracy. Socialism will start off by being to a large extent formal. This had to be the case in Russia. Its working class operated in a peasant sea, it had a miserably low level of culture even compared to the Tsarists. Moreover, Russia was left isolated as a bastion of working class power because of the treachery of social democracy and the failure of the communist parties in the west.

Socialism, which in essence is a higher form than capitalism, found itself confronted with the necessity of catching up with capitalism. This economic paradox had to have political costs.

There was never a pre-Stalin golden age. Even under Lenin socialist democracy was more an aim than a reality. This was by and large unavoidable. The CPSU's adaption to backwardness and its centrist doctoring of scientific tenets of Marxism-Leninism was not. The Soviet Union did not degenerate, its Communist Party did.

Centrism has opened the door to a craven adaption to bourgeois society by our world communist movement and now its disintegration; it has acted as a brake on the world revolution.

The inevitable problem of bureaucracy has therefore been compounded in the USSR. When we have socialism starting from the base of the most advanced capitalism we will have to fight to control the bureaucracy. The working class bureaucracy born but combated under Lenin's leadership has

not only spawned centrism, become institutionalised and self-perpetuating, it has also become a fetter on the development of productive forces in the Soviet Union today (and, for that matter, in the socialist countries which have copied the Soviet model). In order to remove the growing contradiction between productive forces and bureaucratic productive relations there will have to be a hard struggle.

The bureaucracy must be brought under control through far reaching measures of socialist democracy. If the Soviet working class decides that this requires a political revolution we will wholeheartedly support it. Certainly the political monopoly and privileges of the bureaucracy must be ended. Soviets must become the real institutions of power in the land. This means that opposition parties must be allowed and working class initiative made the determining feature of society. This will unfetter production. Unfortunately, Gorbachev is not even offering this, let alone delivering it.

What then are we seeing today? Obviously a struggle within the existing leadership, not a political revolution which would mean its overthrow. Against what R Yurukoglu calls the rising technocracy, the conservative elements in the bureaucracy, those whom Gorbachev says sit in offices built and furnished like 'palaces' are fighting a stubborn rearward action, a campaign of sabotage through inertia. There is nothing communist about this campaign, but what of Gorbachev's measures?

Glasnost has been used by Gorbachev as a weapon to expose the corruption and slothfulness of the old bureaucracy. But, as a by-product, *glasnost* has also seen the emergence of large numbers of political and cultural clubs. True, most of these wholeheartedly support Gorbachev. Some, such as Pamyat (Memory), are downright Great Russian chauvinists and anti-semitic to boot. Yet the Pandora's Box of political activity independent of the bureaucracy has been opened. It will not easily be closed. Already a Federation of Socialist Clubs has been formed. In spite of its eclecticism this is a good thing.

But, while there can be positive spin offs from *glasnost*, what of *perestroika*? Gorbachev's New Economic Mechanism is equated with Lenin's New Economic Policy. But this is not 1920. The USSR does not need a strategic retreat. It does not need less socialism; it needs more. NEM can only bring short term advances and long term dangers.

In our view, there is nothing progressive about downgrading the

role of planning. It needs democratising, not abandoning. Market socialism will not solve the Soviet Union's problems. Socialism must march along the road to communism, not beat a retreat back to the mechanisms of capitalism.

Moreover, the more the capitalist elements are strengthened, the greater the danger of capitalist restoration, not so much from some counterrevolution by a new peasant kulak class and Nemmen but from sections of the bureaucracy transforming their control of the forces of production into either individual or state capitalist ownership, using the NEM elements as a social base.

In spite of these dangers and the bureaucratic dead weight on socialism the mighty Soviet working class has remained passive. This is only a temporary state of affairs. This class, which in October 1917 opened a new chapter in world history, will not remain quiet for long.

Even as a class in itself it has no enthusiasm for Gorbachev's reforms. Rightly so. The NEM orientation towards so-called market socialism will produce higher prices and lower real wages for workers. The practice of market socialism in Hungary, China and Yugoslavia do not bode well for the living standards of workers in the USSR.

Market socialism might mean that the NEM peasant and petty capitalist grow rich because of higher prices but this goes hand in hand with unemployment and a fall in real wages.

When this is carried out in the name of advancing socialism it is tragic, but hardly surprising, that workers become alienated from socialism. No one should forget what happened in Poland in 1981. According to *The Times* Gorbachev says he is determined to push his measures through even if there is social unrest in the Soviet Union.

So there are real dangers with the road Gorbachev is taking. The pre-crisis situation he spoke of when taking over the reins of leadership could become a full blown crisis. This need not result in a Solidarnosc scenario.

The working class in the Soviet Union is far more advanced and has far greater experience, not least the collective memory of October 1917. Soviet workers have no love of bureaucratic privilege but socialism is theirs; they made it, it was not handed down from above. They will fight tooth and nail to defend and advance it. We will support whatever measures the Soviet working class uses in the fight for communism, including a political revolution.

Jack Conrad



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists
of the Communist Party of Great Britain

IN THE aftermath of the Labour and Conservative conferences, working class militants must take a sober look at the state of our movement. The need for a 'review' is being energetically promoted. We concur wholeheartedly. With stock markets crashing the time is right to think again about a 'workers' party not committed to socialism but to wider share ownership.

The 'Moving Ahead' banner that fronted the Labour Party conference was a sick joke. Both right and left of the party starkly revealed the crisis of reformism that has laid them low. Brian Gould, the right's front man, presented ideas to the conference that were more or less lifted whole from the Tory Party manifesto. The 'yuppyfication' of the party is being greeted with howls of indignation by the Labour left but, given that the party is the property of the trade union bureaucracy, it is being railroaded through with block votes despite them.

The real problem that the right of the Labour Party faces is not the ineffectual challenge of the disorientated left; rather it comes from the crisis of identity the party faces. Every time Labour adopts another Tory policy, every time it lurches further to the right, the Tories respond by simply moving the goal posts even further to the right.

The so-called 'hard left' of the party have illustrated time and time again that they are dependent on the right and have no intention of leading any sort of serious fight against the class war Tories. In the aftermath of their conference mauling they have retreated into simply organising wound-licking conferences like Tony Benn's Chesterfield gathering and *Socialist Action's Alliance for Socialism*. These gatherings will see plenty of hot air, fighting rhetoric and, at the end of the day, excuses for backing Kinnock.

Socialist Action's obsession with the Labour Party is indicative of where their Trotskyite politics have ended up. Along with *Militant*, *Socialist Organiser*, et al it sought to change the reformist Labour Party into a socialist organisation but it is clearly they who have changed, not Labour. They have succumbed to dead end reformism.

These so-called revolutionaries over emphasise the vigour of the witch hunt by the right in order to absolve themselves from fighting for, or leading, action. This shows that there is a crisis in both wings of the Labour Party. This is undoubtedly a product of the crisis of British capitalism. The depth of the crisis of Labour's so-called 'socialism' is transparently clear. As capitalism gets deeper and deeper into difficulty Labour abandons one after the other of its reformist 'principles'. Of course, these are not genuine socialist principles. Labour is not a socialist party of any kind and it never has been.

Those in the Labour Party who claim to be the heirs of Bolshevism, such as *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Militant* and others who say the Labour Party is a vehicle for socialism are well to the right of Russia's Mensheviks. They were principled revolutionaries by comparison.

The October Revolution, which all the entrists have just celebrated, proved one thing above anything else: workers need a vanguard Marxist-Leninist party. This can never come in Britain as a result of fostering illusions in the socialist potential of Her Majesty's party of loyal opposition.

We call on all working class partisans to join us in the struggle to build a Bolshevik Party in Britain, a Party which, like the Bolsheviks, will be totally disloyal to the monarch, totally opposed to reformism and totally committed to the fight for socialist revolution.

The Editor

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LETTERS

South Africa

Unfortunately, during the summer months that *The Leninist* did not appear, one or two important issues have been missed. In this period of time one of the most important issues has been the South African NUM strike. From an international class point of view it was perhaps the most significant event so far this year. As there was no *Leninist* there was no comment from your group, no call for solidarity action, no appeal for funds etc.

It seems you have ignored it for expediency, as you were more concerned with internal affairs and the lobby of the TUC.

Of course, all issues are important and one has to sometimes choose order of priority, but I feel the mineworkers' strike in South Africa was the number one priority.

Bernard Wing
South London

Alan Merrik replies:

Of course, the comrade is quite right. The South African miners' strike was an extremely important action that we should have covered, both by putting our position forward and through encouraging and publicising British workers' solidarity. We are well aware of this but, as the comrade indicates, no *TL*, no comment.

Poll Tax

I agree that the poll tax must be fought and a united campaign of the left is needed. However, there are several points we must consider. Most people feel the present rating system is unfair and needs reform. Therefore it is not sufficient to be against the poll tax, we must raise the alternatives if we are to succeed in building a campaign.

In respect to the mineworkers support committee type bodies; these are a basis for a united campaign, but they are not all you seem to think. Many were very good at organising accommodation, food supplies and collections but were really weak on politics. They seemed to capitulate on any kind of solidarity strike action and were in many cases dominated by the Labour Party. They certainly were not embryo soviets as most had no mass base.

David Tagg
Ilkly, West Yorks

Sean Quinn replies:

Comrade Tagg seems to think that embryonic organs of workers power spring forth waving red flags and AK47s, with the words 'workers' soviet' stamped firmly upon them. Sadly, life is not so kind. For example, comrade, on your point that the support committees were dominated by Labourism: this is a characteristic that they shared with the councils of action in the Britain of 1920, the self-same councils that Lenin dubbed "embryonic soviets". The Bolsheviks in 1905 initially baulked at entering the St Petersburg Soviet, on the grounds that it was dominated by Menshevism. Until, that is, Lenin's line won the day.

The struggle that had to be fought within the miners' support committees was essentially the same battle that had to be fought within broadly similar bodies in 1905, 1917 and 1920; the fight to break them from the grip of opportunism and to realise their full potential.

In brief, on the question of an

alternative to the poll tax: we propose that the system that exploits us should pay for all our services and that we pay nothing. Surely, given the fact that it has ridden on our backs for centuries, this is a most moderate demand.

Gorbachev

The Soviet working class, unlike *Marxism Today* and the centrists of the NCP, the CCG and Straight Leftism, show signs of being less than keen on Gorbachev's economic reforms.

The tightening up of production and quality control in the factories is producing dissatisfaction. Workers are loosing their bonuses because their products are failing the more stringent quality controls. Is this because they are feckless, lazy or good-for-nothing? No, it is because the 'technology' they are using is more often than not out-dated, badly produced or both and is therefore incapable of doing what the bureaucrats say it should.



And who pays here, in a workers' state of 70 years standing? The working class! Perhaps comrade Castro is right to call *glasnost* decadent!

Not only are bonuses decreasing but because of the market-orientated reforms of *perestroika* the price of basic necessities of working class life such as food and clothing, so long protected, are beginning to soar. Small comfort for Soviet workers, then, that higher quality goods are now available in the shops if the reduction in living standards and the rise in prices prohibits them from buying them.

Kath Francis
Edinburgh

Autonomous

It is important to distinguish Leninist opposition within a communist party from the nature of the current battles being fought within the Labour Party.

Where reformist politics have proved to be sexist and racist, it is understandable that women (successfully) and black people (unsuccessfully as yet) have raised the demand for autonomy within the Labour Party. Alan Merrik, in issue 54, argues that such moves have not helped Sinn Féin; but advances such as the 1986 Labour Party conference vote to end a free 'conscience' vote on abortion by Labour MPs may well prove to be of practical value to many women.

Unless this autonomy is won, it will be all the more difficult to expose the basic contradiction between emancipation and reformist politics. Also, those (eg the *Militant* sect) who argue that the demands for autonomy come entirely from 'careerists' are wrong – the most energetic and committed activists have grown up with the fight for autonomy against the

reactionary policies of the Labour Party, and careful argument will be needed to win them over.

Lenin's organisational principles were proved by the historic practical success in 1917, and within weeks all discriminatory laws were abolished. However, since then only limited progress has been made in making a reality of women's equality and full emancipation, and thus simply quoting Lenin's example will not be enough. Indeed, Lenin himself gave ample evidence that he supported autonomy in the practical tasks of emancipation:

"... the emancipation of the workers must be effected by the workers themselves, and in exactly the same way the emancipation of working women is a matter for the working women themselves." And "... to be active in politics under the old, capitalist regime, special training was required, so that women played an insignificant part in politics ... Our task is to make politics available to every working woman." (Fourth conference of Moscow City non-Party working women, September 23 1919).

T Mahon
Manchester

Palestine

I would be interested in learning about your criticism of Soviet 'peaceful coexistence' with regard to Israel/Palestine. However, I know little of Soviet-PLO relations, the extent of Soviet influence in the Middle East, or the nature of the Palestine CP, and would welcome information or references if you have time to help.

Weapons from the USSR must have helped repel Israeli tanks in 1982, but Stalin's immediate recognition of Israel and Syrian backed sieges of Palestinian camps certainly bring a "sickness to our stomachs and a cold chill running down our spines" (Issue 54, front page).

Jim Sands
Bournemouth

Pointless?

What's the point of the Unemployed Workers' Charter trekking 100s of miles in order to lobby the TUC? I thought the whole point of the campaign was to expose the refusal of the leadership of the official movement to organise to unemployed and to agitate to get the unemployed organising themselves.

Yet now you find yourselves trying to pressurise the very people that you were set up to fight in the first place. Petitions, lobbies and fringe meetings don't change the world. Class action does. Forget trying to change the mind of the likes of Norman Willis and get out there where the real action should be for an unemployed organisation – on the streets and on the dole queues.

Robin Daniels

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.



Chater and McLennan were happy together: we say Chater is not and never was a revolutionary

Govan 'True Bolsheviks'

Dear comrades,

We are dismayed and seriously disappointed by your short sighted attacks on the *Morning Star* since your disastrous decision to support the Eurocommunist candidates for the Management Committee at the 1985 AGM of the Peoples Press Printing Society.

We take particular exception to your issue of September 17 where an extremely tendentious article, 'Opportunism in Crisis', misreports and distorts the decisions forced on the Management Committee of the PPPS - decisions which followed a campaign of sabotage fomented and supported by the Eurocommunist majority of the current Communist Party Executive Committee. This campaign of attack and slander has been objectively aided by yourselves and by the deliberate obstructions placed in the way of the *Star* by a section of the workforce at Farringdon Road.

Despite these difficulties, the future of the *Star* has now been assured, and these measures have been supported by the bulk of the membership of the Party, rallying to the cause of their paper.

For example, we only need to look at the situation in Scotland, where the opportunists have attempted to harass and bully their growing ranks of critics but with no success.

In our own branch, after an officially decreed 'dissolution', workers have rallied to our ranks boosting our membership by 25%, including a former member who represented the Party at the 1951 Youth Festival in Berlin, but who had left our ranks following the ascendancy of the anti-Soviet forces in the Party.

You say in your article that the gerrymandering of the 'official' Party congress will lead to a further turn to the right of the CPGB. This is self evident. What you fail to appreciate however, is that class conscious workers are increasingly ignoring the false lead of the opportunists and are flocking to the lead given by the *Star*, the only left daily supported by the labour movement, and officially recognised by the socialist countries. The experience of Govan branch, now approaching 20 members strong, has vindicated this class approach and it is one which will allow the re-establishment of a true Bolshevik Communist Party, based on those denied their rights, once the Eurocommunist gerrymandering has shown the correctness of the recalling of a congress in the true traditions of Marxism-Leninism.

It is not too late to recognise this, and we urge you to retreat from the disastrous line which you are mistakenly pursuing.

Yours fraternally,

Thomas McMahon, chairman Govan branch Communist Party

John Foster, secretary Govan branch Communist Party

THE Govan comrades have written an open, frank letter so we will, as we always do, reply to criticism openly and frankly.

Firstly, no specific errors are identified to support the claim that our article "misreports and distorts" the management committee decisions. We would be grateful to receive factual corrections.

Secondly, we must correct a couple of factual errors. Our paper has never supported Eurocommunism; we supported CPGB candidates for the management committee just as we support CPGB candidates in parliamentary elections. Our article in issue 53 predicted that the CPGB would take "a further turn to the right" after the 40th Congress; we did not say that the cause of this would be gerrymandering. On the contrary, we demonstrated a *political* cause, namely that both the Party and the *Star* are suffering from the same disease of opportunism, which has now reached the terminal stage of liquidationism.

Unfortunately, the Govan comrades make no attempt to demonstrate that the *Star's* politics are not opportunist. Instead, they attack the bureaucratic methods of the Euros and implicitly defend the bureaucratic methods of Chater and the management committee.

Opposition to gerrymandering does not make one a Leninist. It is admirable to speak of "the true traditions of Marxism-Leninism" but a CCG split will not produce the "true Bolshevik Communist Party" the working class in Britain needs if we are to win socialism in our country.

The leaders of the CCG are revisionists and anti-democratic re-

visionists to boot. Chater's so-called pro-Sovietism and love of democracy in the Party is a very recent phenomenon. He sat on the right opportunist dominated Political Committee for years without once fighting its bureaucratic centralism or its rightist drift.

Only when the Euros threatened to take his paper away did he rebel. Do you really think that such an opportunist will accept the democracy of a CCG party, let alone respect the rights of minorities? This is not personal abuse. Chater's present anti-democratic methods in PPPS AGMs and past anti-democratic methods on the Party leadership are not due to a simple personality defect, but ingrained opportunist politics.

Blaming the Euros for the *Star's* problems serves as a cover for the *Star's* chauvinism on Ireland, its economism and its lack of openness and its commitment to a transparently bankrupt reformist programme, the *British Road to Socialism*. It also breeds unbelievable complacency.

We are told "the future of the *Star* has now been assured" and "class conscious workers are flocking to the lead given by the *Star*". Which planet do you live on, comrades?

We are glad that Govan's membership has risen by 25%, but 20 members committed to a NCP Mark II split do not a Bolshevik Party make. Already the CCG is riddled with factions, a CCG party will only reproduce all the factions of the 1970s CPGB only on a much lower basis. The working class needs this like a hole in the head.

As to the future of the *Star*, it is bleak. The so-called survival plan is in ruins, even Chater admits

that. But we, unlike him, do not blame the *Star's* workforce for this failure, we blame rotten opportunist politics.

When comrades try to impress on us that the *Star* is "supported by the labour movement" and "officially recognised by the socialist countries", we do not find ourselves impressed. The labour movement in Britain is dominated by reformism, the socialist countries by bureaucratic centrism.

The *Star* economically worships the reformist trade union secretary and, without the slightest self criticism about its critical past, it now shamelessly tails the *present* (ie. the latest) leadership, in the Soviet Union. The *Star* has no independent proletarian politics. The *Leninist*, not the *Star*, is Britain's *Iskra*.

Comrades, we attack opportunism, not the CPGB or the *Star*. Both the Party and the *Star* can yet be saved from liquidation, but only by Leninist politics, not by CCGers spitting the CPGB and fudging their internal differences in the face of the 'main enemy' (Wasn't that the right-Euros' excuse for tactical voting?).

While *Communist Campaign Review* and the *Morning Star* dare not confront, let alone reply to, our principled Marxist-Leninist polemic, no matter how deeply we disagree with them, it stands to the credit of the Govan communists that they have written to *The Leninist*. We call upon all others locked into the liquidationist CCG project to follow the Govan example, and not leave it as the honourable exception.

Ian Farrell

During October, the *Morning Star* Management Committee held a series of national meetings (Bristol, London, Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Cardiff) with speakers Mary Rosser and Tony Chater. These were designed to 'explain' to the assembled *Morning Star* loyalists how the *Star* had got itself into so dire a predicament that it had to sell the Farringdon Road building, sack production staff, sell the press which was to print the paper out of crisis and so on. Unfortunately, the majority of the audience wanted to believe whatever it was told, tall stories and all. And tall stories they were indeed! Rosser and Chater blamed the *Star's* plight on the CPGB, Robert Maxwell, the capitalist market and even the hapless sacked printers. In fact, they blamed anybody and anything they could think of, except the real culprits - themselves and their rotten opportunist politics. Opposition there was, above all in London. A couple of Straight Leftists, sacked communist printers (who had originally backed the so-called survival plan with hard cash) united with militants of *The Leninist*. Typically, nothing critical was heard from the few NCP and *Proletarian* supporters, who came along. They were there just to make up the pitiful numbers and sell their dismal publications. Although outside London the fairy stories of Chater and Rosser were, by and large, submissively received by the assembled faithful, these meetings did not bode well for the CCG project of an NCP Mark II. The CCG, we can say with certainty, will produce no 'Bolshevik Communist Party'. Attendances at the meetings totalled only around 400 (50% in London), the vast majority of whom were veterans of our movement, and will not see sixty-five again. 'Apologetic' is the term that best summed up the mood of the bulk of the pro-Management Committee speakers. Indeed, many pro-CCG speakers, like Tom Durkin, Mike Hicks and Maggie Bowden used their contributions to attack *The Leninist*, indirectly or directly, and in an attempt to answer the points we made in our hard hitting leaflet directed at *Morning Star* readers and supporters.

Those who have hopped onto the *glasnost* bandwagon might like to ponder on this snippet from the *Evening Standard* of October 12: "In a speech commemorating the 20th anniversary of Guevara's death, Fidel Castro attacked 'glasnost' as decadent materialism, saying it will never be adopted in Cuba while he is alive." Apparently comrade Castro sent a somewhat ruffled Shevardnadze back to Moscow. Given comrade Gorbachev's offer to Yankee imperialism on what he terms 'international hot spots' (central America?) and his market-orientated reforms (how profitable can the much subsidised socialist Cuba be?) one can see his point. Viva Cuba! Cuba Si!

The past two and a half years of drawn out industrial action by the teachers has had an interesting effect on those in the CPGB. Many rank and filers from all camps have, in relative terms, moved to the left. Yet, at the same time, those at the top of the various opportunist pyramids have moved to the right. This was proven by the Party's poorly attended national teachers' meeting of October 3. With only 35 there it was the smallest for years. The real problem though, was not numbers, it was politics. The meeting centred on two related themes: how to bash the 'Trots' and how to tail the NUT Executive Committee. In spite of attacks from the left, leading Straight Leftist/Communist teacher, Pat Turnbull, went along with the Eurocommunists. Apparently it was hard to distinguish her contributions from those of the most ardent fans of *Marxism Today*. The Straight Leftists like all the opportunist grouping want to base their political actions on the most backward, most moderate, most conservative elements. This is why there is such hatred for the militants who support the various petty bourgeois revolutionary organisations to the left of the official labour movement.

Principle above all



Our politics are the result of principle, not the search for popularity. Our 1917 will come in due course. Because we have refused to elevate the Soviet CP to divine status or damn it as the devil, the 57 varieties of opportunism have attempted to witch hunt our supporters, calling them everything from anarchist to Stalinist, from East German financed to CIA agent, from Maoist to Trotskyite. Because we dared to publish the truth about our CPGB, because we showed it was heading for crisis and was riddled with covert factions, in true 1984 style the EC banned *The Leninist* from all Party bookshops and prohibited support for it. All this places a particular responsibility on our readers to take extra copies and provide us with the necessary finances for advertising, post etc. to make the bans ineffective. Last month we received £489 towards our £600 monthly target. This is good but obviously not enough. We need to do better in November.



• Fidel says Che wouldn't have supported 'glasnost'

The name R Yurukoglu is well known to readers of The Leninist. His works have had a profound impact on the theoretical positions of this paper. As this interview makes clear, there can be little doubt that, like capitalism, all the tendencies in 'official' communism are in crisis. But as the old is collapsing, the new is coming to the fore. Nowhere is this more true than in Turkey. When Turkey's 'official' Communist Party liquidated itself and merged with the reformist Workers Party of Turkey, it was comrade Yurukoglu who announced to the world that the genuine communists of Turkey, organised around the paper Iscinin Sesi, had held the Sixth Congress of their party and reclaimed the proud name Communist Party of Turkey. This is a great victory for the forces of Leninism and the working class everywhere. In our interview, Yurukoglu deals with this as well as a wide range of key political issues, not only within Turkey but in the world as a whole



Democ and

democracy?

Turkey is in our opinion a very serious candidate for the European Community. There are two basic reasons for this. In order for industry to compete on an international scale it must break out of the confines of Turkey. Trade barriers must be removed if it is to compete on any serious level. It is life and death for them.

They want to pursue the aim of imperialism by using membership of the European Community as a stepping stone. So, for the Turkish bourgeoisie, membership of the EC is a deadly serious aim. As for bourgeois democracy in Turkey, there is a 'sort of' bourgeois democracy today in Turkey. But it is futile to expect any kind of stable European bourgeois democracy.

The Leninist: Just to go back. You were saying that for Turkey membership of the EC is a serious business. But what about the present members of the EC? Do they regard Turkey as a serious candidate?

The Leninist: What impact has the Gulf war and the rise of fundamentalism had on Turkey? Will we see an Iran in Turkey? Is there any possibility of Turkey becoming involved in the war?

The Gulf war has had a definite impact on Turkey. First in a direct way: there are around one million Iranian refugees in Turkey. Second, there is a drive for exports to Iran and this creates a certain softness towards fundamentalism. But we don't expect to see an Iran in Turkey.

It has had a very different history. The formation of the republic after World War I represented a compromise between the fundamentalists and the westernised bureaucracy, the army and so on. On the other hand, it represented the suppression of fundamentalism. This has shaped the whole situation today.

Turkey is a different country. There are well established and open political parties and movements. Above all, there is a relatively experienced working class, 15 million strong; the biggest class in the country. So, although fundamentalism is growing, we will not see an Iran in Turkey.

The Leninist: What about the question of involvement in the war? Especially if, say, the present regimes in either Iran or Iraq were to collapse?

Yes, yes, there is this danger. If the situation was ripe, Turkey would not hesitate to enter the war, possibly on the side of Iraq but definitely against Iran.

The Leninist: Turkey is a member of Nato, it is a strategic country as far as imperialism is concerned. A revolution in Turkey would undoubtedly send shock waves throughout the world. Recognising this, those who counterpose the struggle for peace and the struggle for revolution, say fighting for a revolution in such a country is a provocation, it will bring the world nearer the apocalypse, so revolution should be put off for the sake of peace. What is your view of the relationship between war and revolution?

To say the revolution in Turkey, or for that

matter in any other country, will bring world war is a ridiculous way of reasoning. Practically, there might arise the danger of war with this or that revolution. But the ball should not be on the exploited peoples side, the danger of war comes from imperialism. Those who reason along the lines you quote in your question are the wishy washy liberals, the opportunists and the revisionists.

Let us take a country where the masses say they cannot go on living in the old way, it is better to die than to let the old order continue. You cannot tell people who are oppressed and exploited 'don't make a revolution - war may come'. This is absurd.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie is not so stupid. After the revolution, the capitalist system will still have expectations from a socialist Turkey. We will still have political and economic ties with the rest of the world. Revolution in Turkey will not take us out of the world, on to another planet. We will get into every sort of contact with every sort of country.

To counterpose peace and revolution and say that revolutions bring wars is the biggest theoretical hypocrisy. We believe revolutions are the only real way to stop imperialism bringing war. You cannot talk imperialism out of war. You can only bring it to peace by taking areas and people out of its control and reach.

The Leninist: The recent referendum in Turkey narrowly resulted in Ecevit and Demirel, the leaders of old opposition parties, being allowed back into parliamentary politics. Prime minister Ozal has claimed a victory in spite of the fact that he campaigned for a 'no' vote. In the light of this, how would you describe the situation in Turkey today?

The referendum result was not a victory for Ozal and definitely not one for Ecevit or Demirel. It was a victory for the people, a victory for the aspirations for democracy in Turkey, because against all the odds, against the power of the state, the power of money, the result cancelled authoritarian bans. This is in itself a step towards democratisation in the

country.

The Leninist: Why then is Ozal claiming a victory?

He is a very cunning politician. He falsely claims his party's share of the vote has increased by projecting the 'no' votes as votes for his own party. But this is not so, as will be seen in the coming general election. By any standards of logic he cannot claim a victory. Ozal called for a 'no' vote but the people voted 'yes'. As to Ecevit and Demirel, they expected a much larger 'yes' vote. And they also know that the so-called hard left worked very hard for them. A handsome slice of the 'yes' votes came from revolutionaries. So there are no bourgeois winners.

After the referendum political developments have greatly increased in speed. Democratic rights have increased, not because the laws changed, but because people are disregarding them, producing lots of periodicals and forming all sorts of organisations. After the elections this process will certainly gain more momentum.

The Leninist: The opposition parties are at present disputing the date of the elections you just mentioned. They want them to be held after November 7 when the ban imposed on those who boycotted the general's referendum will have ended. But whenever the elections happen, will they usher in a new phase in Turkish politics?

Looking at things as they are today I cannot say they will usher in a new phase. Nonetheless it will accelerate developments. Whatever the outcome, the class struggle will sharpen. For years the bourgeois politicians have been trying to de-politicise the people, trying to make politics a game for their small circle. The referendum and now the election will increase the political awareness of the people and this will further draw them into political activity.

The Leninist: Turkey has applied to join the European Community. Is Turkey a serious candidate for the Western European imperialist club? In other words, can Turkey become an imperialist power and a stable bourgeois



Comrade R Yurukoglu

racy, Socialism Revolution

The Europeans try not to take it seriously. This is not because of a lack of democracy and human rights in Turkey but because of Turkey's surplus population. They are afraid that millions of Turkish workers will flood into Europe.

The Leninist: In the light of what you say about the impossibility of Turkey becoming a stable bourgeois democracy, how do you evaluate the formation of the United Communist Party of Turkey?

Although Turkey cannot become a stable bourgeois democracy, today democracy is widening. This is mainly due to the struggles of the working class. Along with this, the aim of joining the EC is also a factor which helps the democratisation process. Because of it, all the bourgeois politicians say they would accept a legal Communist Party in Turkey. So legality is on the agenda. And the left, all the left, are geared to that prospect.

The formation of the UCPT expresses a yearning for legality. They have discarded the

concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat from the programme of the new party, saying people may misunderstand it. Its formation will be useful to the class struggle in Turkey. It will crystallise the difference and the separation of the reformist and revolutionary forces in the country.

The Leninist: Was reclaiming the name Communist Party of Turkey by the revolutionary forces merely symbolic or does it represent something more fundamental? Do you place greater emphasis on the liquidation of the 'official' CPT or the change of name by the Communist Party of Turkey - Worker's Voice to the Communist Party of Turkey? Our Party's reclaiming its rightful name is not symbolic, it is of profound political, historical, ideological and organisational significance. The coming years will prove that. When it comes to putting emphasis on the liquidation of the 'official' CPT by the opportunists or our Party taking its rightful name, it is wrong in a sense to differentiate these two processes.

They are the two faces of the same coin. On the one hand it is significant because it shows the bankruptcy of opportunism. The merger with the reformist Workers Party of Turkey is a natural outcome of the development of the world communist movement. On the other hand it shows that life itself will always produce revolutionary answers to the opportunists.

The Leninist: A few years ago your Party set itself the aim of becoming rooted in the advanced section of the working class in Turkey, in particular those trade unionists working in large factories. How far has the CPT advanced in fulfilling this aim?

We have travelled a long way along the road. Today we are rooted in the working class. The majority of our members are workers. Party cells are operating in most of the trade unions and in all the big unions. We have organisations in several strategic factories but there is a lot to be done on a factory basis.

We have had important results but we have also had some important difficulties to overcome. The difficulties stem from the history of our Party and problems of operating under fascism. The main difficulty that we have encountered was that the Party had lost the ability, or at least the burning desire, to increase its membership. There were three reasons for this. Where our comrades were working in difficult conditions they approached conspiratorial work in such a way that new members were seen as a threat to the security of the Party.

But most importantly there was no common approach in the Party on who can and who cannot be a member. We have worked very hard to overcome these shortcomings and in the main we have succeeded. The results of this year's strategic plan will show that we have increased the size of the Party to a significant extent.

The Leninist: *Iscinin Sesi* (Worker's Voice - ed) is undoubtedly a paper for advanced workers, it can truly be called Turkey's *Iskra*. Have you any plans for a Turkish *Pravda*, a paper to organise millions?

Not yet! There are three reasons for that. First, our illegal organisations in Turkey are not steered enough to control such a legal centre. Second, what you can write in a legal publication is still limited. To write a communist thesis in a legal publication would involve important compromises and concessions. We would have to write in a vague way, an allegorical way, and this would blunt the consciousness of the working class. Third, the circulation of the legal left publications are not so large to tell us that an illegal publication cannot compete. For example, the biggest selling legal periodical is *Towards 2000*, and it sells only 7,000 copies.

The Leninist: That's very small.

Yes, it's a very small circulation. *Iscinin Sesi*, which is an illegal publication produced in Europe and Turkey, has a circulation approaching 3,000. Instead of starting a legal publication, we have set the target of distributing 5,000 copies. So the situation shows that the day of the illegal publication has not passed.

The Leninist: Can we now turn to other questions, in particular the Soviet Union? The Soviet Union has for a long time been in need of reorganisation and openness. How do you judge Gorbachev's reforms? Are they a political revolution? Is he going too far, or not far enough? What does the Soviet Union need to strengthen itself?

What they criticise of the past, the Brezhnev years and so on, is good. It shows that, in spite of all the names they called us, what we were saying was correct. The criticism is good in this sense. Nevertheless, the road they are on is still not the correct one.

It is definitely not a political revolution. It is definitely not democracy. It is definitely not involving the people in the running of the state and the economy. It is a fight in the bureaucracy. It is an expression of the bureaucracy turning into a technocracy. This is not democratisation. You cannot seriously expect democracy to result from an unchallenged ruling party allowing a secret vote on the central committee!

It is not a question of going too fast or too slow. It is again a question of going in the wrong direction. What the Soviet Union needs is the following:

- All the official and secret privileges of the Party and state must be abolished. The 27th Congress called for a widening of the differential between the wages of technicians and engineers and workers. Instead of that we say all top officials should be paid only the average of the skilled worker. This is very important in order to control the bureaucracy.
- There must be a working week of only 35

hours.

- There must be equal pay for equal work - women are still in practice paid less for the same work.

- Male chauvinism is very widespread in the Soviet Union. This must be fought.

- Instead of work collectives selecting the manager they must run the affairs of the workplace.

- Piecework must be abolished.

- The working class must have the right to strike.

- When and if the interests of the state and the manager conflict with the working people, the trade unions must stand with the working people.

- In educational institutions children of working class parents must have places according to their weight in society. Especially in higher educational institutions the children of the working class make up only a small percentage of students. The children of the bureaucracy get a higher education. So the bureaucracy becomes self-perpetuating. This must change.

- The one party system must be abolished. Plurality of parties must be allowed. Not only parties which accept the leading role of the Communist Party and so on, but really independent parties. The opposition must have full facilities for meetings and propaganda.

- Soviets must become the ultimate power in the land. There must be free and open elections to them. In this way the fusion of the state and the party can be abolished.

- The concept of state secrets must be abolished.

- Mental asylums and work camps must not be used for political ends.

These measures would create socialist democracy as we understand it. This democracy with its freedom and the plurality of parties is not a bourgeois parliamentary system. It is replacing party dictatorship with an institutionalised proletarian dictatorship. It is the institutionalisation of the proletarian dictatorship.

What Gorbachev is doing is not a political revolution. But in the coming months and years all sorts of political activity to the right and left will appear in the Soviet Union. And there is every chance that the working class will utilise this situation to make a real political revolution, in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. This will bring a renaissance in the world communist movement. A revolution in a relatively important country could really help developments in the Soviet Union.

The Leninist: How will a socialist Turkey avoid the political conservatism we have seen in so many socialist countries? Is a bureaucratic caste inevitable? Can it be controlled?

A true socialist democracy, the measures we advocate for the Soviet Union, would mean that the working class would have control over the bureaucracy. In capitalist society bureaucracy is the loyal servant of the ruling class. It is the capitalist class which has real power through the ownership and control of the means of production. This makes it easy to keep the bureaucracy a loyal servant.

Under socialism it is more complex. The working class is not yet ready to rule totally and wholly - when it reaches that level the state will disappear. The working class does not control the state, the means of production. The bureaucracy controls the state and the means of production. Only through socialist democracy and democratic initiative can the bureaucracy be made into a loyal servant.

The Leninist: Finally, looking at the world communist movement today, how would you assess its future?

As communists we are totally optimistic about the future. Today has many, many similarities with the period of the collapse of the Second International. In my personal opinion today we are living in the midst of the collapse of the world communist movement.

This collapse has not come with a world war; that is why it is a prolonged, disguised, uneven and slow process. But the world communist movement is in collapse! You cannot find any really revolutionary parties in that movement.

We are optimistic, totally optimistic because yes, this movement collapses, another movement rises and then yes, that one collapses. It does not really matter. The world working class is here and fighting. As long as the working class lives it will find its revolutionary answer.

As a final note I must say that this collapse of the communist parties is the collapse of opportunism, not the collapse or even crisis of communism. Marxism-Leninism still holds the key for human progress.



The RCP's the next step of October 9 carried a page long appraisal of Che Guevara, 20 years after he was killed fighting in Bolivia. Funnily enough, the article failed to mention the nature of the revolutionary state he helped give birth to. Odd that you should write a commemoration to a man without mentioning his greatest achievement – a leading part in the creation of a socialist state. When queried on this 'oversight' by a bemused Leninist comrade, one leading RCP'er stated that she didn't know what Cuba was, but she was sure that it wasn't socialist. This is at least more succinct than their analysis of the Soviet Union, which takes them over 200 pages to say much the same thing.

It is a cold, wet Wednesday afternoon. The editorial team at Marxism Today are hunched over their cold cups of coffee, puzzling how to shock workers and titillate the middle classes this month by advocating yet another piece of right wing nonsense in the pages of what purports to be a "communist" publication. A bright spark in the corner suddenly pipes up: "I say! Why not have a personal finance column with writers from the Investors Chronicle and the Financial Times?" Brilliant, they all agree! One month later, the markets throw the biggest wobbly since the 1929 disaster for world capitalism. Give that man a paper hat.

The Workers' International League, one of the grumpy splits from the WRP, put out a leaflet on the recent Moses Mayekiso demo in London denouncing the attitude adopted to the march by "both factions of the Communist Party". One of our comrades pointed out that in fact there are a few more than two factions in the CP – at present probably something like eight. The Trot leaflet-distributer replied, "We're not interested in the CP anyway". Rigorous cadre development in the Trot milieu seems to be proceeding apace despite recent splits.

Mick Costello, erstwhile industrial correspondent for the Morning Star and, apparently, one time 'great white hope' of the Party's opposition which hoped against hope that he would one day be general secretary of the Party, has taken up a new post with the wet and dreadful News on Sunday. Surely, when rats desert sinking ships, they generally do so in favour of vessels which are not already well on their way to the sea bed?

There is a time to talk.
But there is also a time
to act

Not what the system can afford



Mick Gavan: witch hunted by Straight Leftists, Trotskyites and left Labourites all because he fights for the unemployed

THE YEAR'S passage from a rather dull and uninspiring summer into the golden hues of autumn is celebrated annually by the high priests of the British labour movement in a bizarre and often misunderstood ritual, hereafter known as 'conference season'.

The two major events, the TUC and Labour Party conferences – this year apparently devoted to the gods of food and wine – are joined by hosts of smaller conferences, often with a common theme. Nineteen eighty seven's conference season is overblessed with ones on unemployment. For instance, there was the conference to regurgitate the sickly sweet 'Hands Across Britain' in the form of 'Campaign For Work' – whose 'grand design', incidentally, is to convene a conference in October 1988, no less – and more ambitious and militant sounding ventures, such as the Liverpool Trades Council organised conference on October 12, which did draw in some militants. Many more are in the pipeline.

The approach to unemployed organisation, proposed both through sections of the TUC machine and various publications, one of which is the soporific, would-be 'non-factional' *Straight Left*, is to link up the unemployed workers centres. One 'Kevin Millward' outlined their proposals for this back in July.

These proposals, it seems, coincide with the TUC's resolution last year for (in Millward's words): "The formation of a National Steering Committee of Unemployed Centres made up from Regional Steering Committees such as the one in the South East and

that this committee could be a sub-committee of the TUC's Employment, Policy and Organisation Committee.

"Holding National Conferences annually with at least three delegates from each centre of which at least two should be unemployed," ...and so it continues.

What a bureaucratic mire! Inspired? Intoxicated with a wild, revolutionary optimism you thought long dead? Thought not.

This approach is deadly. It allows obese bureaucrats, with the willing assistance of those in the Straight Left mould, to sit back on their heels in Congress House and say they have done their bit. But those with any experience of TUC double-speak must be only too well aware that the 'advisory body to the regional sub-committee of...etc' leviathan is designed to divert, trap and kill any real fight-back.

Anyway, the TUC is closing, not organising, unemployed centres. In the past couple of years the crumbs the TUC has offered the unemployed – little more than 'tea and sympathy' centres – have been winking out of existence, one by one, at a quite fantastic rate.

To then turn round and pontificate on grand schemes to link these centres is to ask us to swallow a little too much. Organising a fight-back, where possible incorporating the unemployed workers centres, is of course to be worked towards. But under current conditions, to take such a link-up of TUC financed unemployed workers centres as a prerequisite for any action, as is the vogue today, is to tie any resistance to those least willing to resist – the TUC bureaucracy, who hold the purse strings.

Frankly, it is just not going to happen.

Ernie wise?

Ernie Roberts, former Labour MP and 1930s National Unemployed Workers Movement activist, is at the moment trying to spring-board a national organisation of the unemployed with the help of "a National Steering Committee... set up by members of parliament, trade union leaders and local leaders of the unemployed." (from Roberts' article in *The New Worker*, September 25 1987.)

Now, whereas we agree with and welcome many of his central demands, such as the right to work, the way in which this project is being set about leaves much room for criticism. For instance, the conference which originally floated this idea in the House of Commons as far back as in April was representative only of the Campaign Group of MPs and a few score unemployed workers centre workers and trade union officials.

The only concrete actions around basic demands of the unemployed that were put forward, by supporters of the Unemployed Workers Charter, were rejected out of hand by the majority at the conference. Six months later this National Steering Committee has only got so far as to organise yet another conference. Will we see any action from this body this time round, or just another forum for left Labour MPs and TUC bureaucrats to salve their consciences?

The rationale behind Ernie's campaign, too, rests on somewhat shaky ground. He claims "there is no real excuse for unemployment. The £100,000 million taken out of Britain and invested abroad should be invested here in British industries and services." Frankly, what the capitalist system can or cannot afford should be of no interest to workers, even if Ernie's left reformist arguments held any water. Certainly his old organisation, the NUWM, did not trouble itself on this – its message was clear: if the system cannot afford it then we will replace the system. This simple statement must be the bedrock for any successful organisation of the unemployed today.

Defend CUAC!

Possibly the sharpest illustration of the hypocrisy of the majority of the official labour movement on the question of the organisation of the unemployed has been its attitude to the threatened closure of Camden Unemployed Action Centre (Cuac).

Briefly stated, Camden's Labour Council wants to close Cuac partially as a fund-saving exercise, but predominantly because Cuac has been one of the few unemployed workers centres to carry out campaigning activity, putting the question of unemployed workers rights before council ledgers. Thus, Cuac has had the effrontery to put out propaganda in the past which opposed council cuts and Labour Party bluster. And all this on Labour council money. Shocking!

Instead of rushing to the defence of Cuac, the local trades council and Communist Party – both, incidentally, heavily influenced by Straight Leftists – have lined up alongside the council, aiding the campaign to close Cuac by throwing allegations of sexism, racism and corruption at the centre.

Straight Leftist Susan Michie's letter in the *Camden New Journal* of October 1, targets Cuac co-ordinator, Mick Gavan, as the perpetrator of many foul deeds: "For example, the [management] committee wished to take a constructive view of the Hands Across

Britain ... Mr Gavan organised a picket against it ... The management urged that campaigning be organised against the Tory government's responsibility for unemployment; yet Mr Gavan was obsessed with blaming the council and ... organising violent occupations of council property."

So, because Cuac opposes patronising nonsense such as HAB and organises in defense of unemployed benefits and in solidarity with CPSA and SCPS strikers, they must go. With friends like Michie and her kind, Camden unemployed have scant need of enemies.

The South East Region of the TUC also has the scent of blood in its nostrils in 'the great Cuac hunt'. Terry Stevens, CCG supporter and – don't laugh – 'Organiser, Services for the Unemployed' for Sertuc, put out a letter dated September 11 to "all full time officials, trade unions, trades councils and TUC unemployed workers' centres in the South East ... recommending withdrawal of TUC recognition of the Camden unemployed workers' centre." This, mark you, is the same man quoted as saying, in a conference on "Trade Unions: into the 1990s" on October 3 that most unemployed workers centre users did not need unemployed workers centres but, rather, social workers. Suggestions as to what Mr Stevens needs should be sent on a postcard to Congress House.

Even the r-r-revolutionary left has balked at backing Cuac. The schematic WRP seems doomed for another split as the *Workers Press* section is split all ways on the question of Cuac. In a meeting organised to defend Cuac on September 25 a group of WRP members, including Charlie Pottins, a leading member, formed a rag bag unpopular front with assorted ultra feminists, black separatists and the simply derailed on the back two rows. Pottins joined in the baiting of every speaker with monstrous accusations of racism, sexism, corruption and any other filthy lie which could be thought of by the petty bourgeois mind. They were looking for trouble all the way along and got it. At the end of the meeting this reactionary pack did succeed in provoking a fight with a female photographer.

Yet at the front of the meeting an 'official' WRPer tried to tell the Cuac users that *Workers Press* did back them. If only this were true. The WRP Political Committee has done a Pontius Pilot. It has washed its hands of the whole affair. This is no doubt because of a desperate desire to retain unity with the reactionary feminists in the ranks of what Healy once claimed as "10,000 fighters for Trotskyism": "We feel sure that readers of the paper will agree that this important issue is best resolved in the working class movement in Camden rather than followed in detail in the pages of *Workers Press*." (WRP Political Committee statement, September 19). This is a cowardly and cynical cop out.

Both the UWC and *The Leninist* have no qualms about backing Cuac against the threats to it from Camden council and its toadies. What it illustrates in a direct fashion is that workers cannot afford to take as read the fake 'backing' of the likes of left Labourites, Stevens and Sertuc. Only by organising around a programme of what we need, not what capitalism can afford, or what the TUC finds expedient, can we build a fightback against unemployment, mobilising employed and unemployed workers alike. Forward to a new National Unemployed Workers' Movement!

Sean Quinn



Blacks and the reds

Racism, resistance and revolution. Peter Alexander, Bookmarks 1987, pp185, £3.95.

MANY MILITANTS view the Socialist Workers Party as having played an honourable, indeed outstanding, role in the fight against racism. This book is designed to reinforce this myth. It is like much of the SWP's propaganda: it makes some very good critical points but in the end lacks a serious strategy for socialism.

The book covers the experience of the US communists in Harlem before World War II. This is well worth studying. Initially isolated from the black masses, the Party became the leader of many black struggles and gained widespread support.

Alexander convincingly shows that racism is best combatted through the militant, revolutionary

unity of black and white workers. Separatism weakens the fighting ability of the black population and leaves them open to manipulation by charlatans and a divide and rule bourgeoisie.

Today many blacks have joined the Labour Party saying that this is the most effective way to fight racism. Alexander shows that the black sections that cause the Labour leadership such a nuisance are in fact little other than vehicles to further the careers of a few individual middle class blacks. Objectively, they tie the mass of blacks to a party, the Labour Party, that defends a system that is inherently racist. Therein, as Alexander says, lies the danger.

The positive aspects of Alexander's book, however, are unfortunately overshadowed by his concluding chapters. As part of the leadership of both the short-lived Anti-Nazi League and the SWP, he is blind to huge errors that both organisations made.

The aim of the ANL was to isolate the National Front. In order to facilitate this they were presented as something 'foreign', 'un-British' and 'Nazi'. In fact, racism is as British as the Union Jack. The ANL's pandering to British chauvinistic prejudice enabled them to reduce the fight against racism to a matter of publicising the 'Nazi' nature of the NF. This meant forces could be involved which, although they could be easily won to rubbish the odd-balls of the NF, would not confront the main source of racism for black people - the British state itself.

To achieve its modest aim, the

ANL spent considerable time organising carnivals and providing platforms for various celebrities. Anti-racism was thus reduced for many to the level of carrying an ANL balloon, wearing a badge and listening to Tom Robinson or the Clash.

During the 1979 general election, the Tories effectively mopped up the electoral support of the NF by Thatcher's anti-immigration stance. With the collapse of the NF's electoral support the *raison d'être* for the ANL disappeared and it was duly dumped by the SWP.

The NF voter may have disappeared but as the subsequent experience of black people in Thatcher's Britain has shown, racism has not.

While Alexander slates the CPs popular fronts of the 1930s, he appears blind to the fact that the ANL was in many ways a classic example of the genre. Alexander is evidently uneasy about the obvious parallels and lamely tries to deflect criticism by introducing a total red herring. The ANL was never a class collaborationist popular front because, he asserts, the assembled Labourites, vicars, pop stars and football managers never actually controlled the organisation.

Is Alexander seriously claiming that at the end of the day it was not the communist parties which actually controlled their popular fronts; that in fact the mixed bag of liberals and reformists we assembled in these unprincipled blocs ran the show? When the Dean of Canturbury appeared on the platform of the CPGB's *Daily Worker* to endorse its fight for "anti-fascist

unity", who was using who? Was the CPGB's popular front really being 'lead' by the likes of the Red Dean? Of course not!

What links the ANL with the popular fronts is their class collaborationism, the denial of the necessity of working class leadership and the perspective of socialist revolution. In the case of the ANL, this led to it ignoring the main source of racism in today's society, the capitalist state, and refusing to direct its activity against that body.

For many anti-racists, the ANL revealed its true populist nature at its second national carnival in 1979. Rather than disrupt the carnival atmosphere and organise physical opposition to the NF march through Brick Lane in London's East End, the ANL leadership was content to listen to pop music and lounge in the sun miles away in south London. The hundred or so anti-racists who did oppose the NF received no assistance from ANL leaders like Alexander.

The hypocrisy of Alexander in this context is really quite staggering. He rightly criticises our CPGB leadership for organising demos that marched in the opposite direction to the fascists in the early part of the 1970s. The ANL's Carnival 2 however, was bigger but the same. Alexander's silence on this is deafening as it is on the paper *Flame*, set up to develop the SWP's links with blacks, which was also unceremoniously closed down by the SWP leadership.

In many ways the ANL orientation represented a summersault

for the SWP. Before the ANL carnivals they had actually challenged and directly harassed fascist marches, a policy that reached its zenith in the pitched battles that erupted in Lewisham. Today's 'down turn' merchants even organised workers' patrols to protect black families from attack. The ANL of Carnival 2 thus represented a dramatic turn-about for the SWP, a switch that was dictated more by the narrow factional concerns of building the SWP than by actually fighting racism.

When the SWP decided the ANL had outlived its usefulness anti-racist work was cynically wound down (although not with opposition from some sections of the SWP's own membership).

Alexander conveniently ignores this. To compare the inward looking SWP of today with the SWP of Lewisham would prove embarrassing. Of course, it is legitimate for Alexander, or anyone else in the workers' movement for that matter, to analyse and develop a critique of the CPUSA's failures in fighting racism. But then there are some skeletons in SWP cupboards too. Alexander is simply being dishonest by ignoring them. Honesty about errors made is a sign of strength, a sign that the lessons taught by those errors have been learned and will never be repeated. Alexander's whitewash job on the SWP's record in the ANL and his glaring omissions from this book must serve as a warning to all working class militants who genuinely want to fight racism.

Tony Coughlin

The Art of Glasnost

Sarcophagus, Vladimir Gubaryev, Royal Shakespeare Company, Mermaid Theatre, October 1987. Letters from a Dead Man, Konstantin Lopushansk (director), USSR 1986.

EVERY western cultural festival has been packed with Soviet films, plays, art collections and delegations eager to promote the Gorbachev 'revolution'. Many in the west have joined the Gorbachev fan club. For the sycophantic New Communist Party, the Straight Leftists/Communist, Morning Star and the Communist Campaign Group this is hardly surprising. Yet we also have *Marxism Today*, Vanessa Redgrave and almost the entire spectrum of the bourgeois media praising comrade Gorbachev's so-called political revolution.

We do not trust fads, they do not tend to last. Communists must defend the Soviet Union today and tomorrow. To do this we must understand what our rulers call the Gorbachev phenomenon. Recent developments in the field of Soviet arts can help; the play *Sarcophagus* and the film *Letters from a Dead Man*, both showing here at the moment, are particularly useful.

Sarcophagus, deals with the immediate aftermath of the Chernobyl explosion. It has been given its first western production by the Royal Shakespeare Company, no less. It was also performed in an abbreviated form as a rehearsed reading at this year's Edinburgh Festival.

Its importance lies not so much in its qualities as a work of art, but the fact that it is a perfect example of *glasnost* art. Its author was in fact the science editor of *Pravda*,

Vladimir Gubaryev.

Gubaryev was *Pravda's* on the spot reporter of the accident and, in relative terms, kept the people of the Soviet Union up to date with the details and effects of the disaster. The play, set in the nuclear research institute where the first victims of the disaster were treated, was published in the September issue of the magazine, *Znaniya* - only four months after the accident. This speed implies decisions taken at the very top level of Soviet leadership, most probably Gorbachev himself, who is seemingly known to have read the play.

The play opens just prior to the accident and we find the institute dealing with just one solitary patient, a remarkable figure who has survived a massive exposure to radiation and sixteen subsequent operations for an unprecedented 487 days. This character, Bessmertny or 'Immortal', as he calls himself, appears to be based on the Russian tradition of the 'holy fool', indeed religious strands run through the entire play.

There is much talk of the atomic devil having jumped out and the three trainee assistants who have just arrived on the ward are young women named Faith, Hope and Charity. This rather clumsy device has maybe lost something in translation but is indicative of the unwieldy nature of the piece. The ploddy, mannered and insincere acting style of the RSC doesn't help the piece (the reading in Edinburgh had far more life to it and made one wish for a full production). But the fault lies in the play itself.

For us though, the interest lies in what the play poses as the problems of the Soviet nuclear power industry and its reflection of industry as a whole under Gorbachev. As happened in reality, the director of the Chernobyl station is portrayed as a yes-man for the bureaucrats in Moscow and a selfish bastard to boot. Equally damned is the chief fire officer, an even more irresponsible piece of work

who unfortunately died before he could be brought to trial.

Yes, the solution put forward is that there must be a trial, and an open one at that. As we know, this did indeed happen and two others along with the director were sent down. But is this labelling of scapegoats fundamentally different from that carried out under previous leaderships? We would say it isn't. There is no admission whatsoever that the bureaucracy as a whole is responsible; that its selfish privileges and corrupt practices make inefficiency, sloppiness and thus disasters like Chernobyl inevitable.

The working class characters in the play are presented as heroic but lesser figures who offer no solutions to the problems of inefficiency and corruption. They observe the problems of the lumbering system but are helpless to do anything about it.

All in all, this is a rather wooden production of a play, worth seeing more for its interest as a Gorbachev play than as a piece of good theatre.

'Letters From a Dead Man', on the other hand is worth seeing for other reasons as well as it being an example of a Gorbachev film. Not that it is without its faults, nevertheless there is no denying it is a major work of art and one of the most chillingly powerful 'science fiction' films on offer today.

Set just after the nuclear holocaust in the ruins of an unidentified European city, the film charts the final days of a Nobel Prize-winning scientist and his search for first his wife and son and then a formula which may enable humankind to survive the devastation - devastation that has been caused by a nuclear confrontation set off by an instruction to disregard the rocket launch coming seven seconds too late from the officer in charge because he choked on his coffee! This may sound ridiculous, but it points to a genuine problem which comes through in 'Sarcophagus' - of humanity being unable to handle the

'devil' which we have conjured up.

The film's director, Konstantin Lopushansky, points to a ferociously chilling future world. Indeed so bleak is it he obviously suffers from what we can only call bourgeois pessimism.

The scientist's searchings take him from the 'deep conservation' central bunker miles underground, which is seen as the only hope for survival, to the ravaged surface via a train full of bodies - "only the dead go to the surface". He finds his wife in the remains of a museum (shot in the burial chambers of the Romanov dynasty) along with a group of what seem to be petty-bourgeois intellectuals struggling to come to terms with what has happened.

Their discussions at the dinner table over plates sparse with meagre rations have a Chekovian quality of blending tragedy and farce - "I love mankind for his tragic fate" says one in a speech "in defence of man" before going into his ready-made grave and shooting himself.

The only moment of 'hope'

comes right at the end with the group of catatonically shocked children who have been excluded from the central bunker but who the scientist chooses to look after. Strong religious elements are brought to the fore here and the message printed over the end titles show that Lopushansky, like the present leadership of the CPSU, puts his faith in persuading imperialism to change its spots. The film ends with a statement issued by Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and other notables calling on the governments of the world to settle their differences peacefully and not revert to nuclear weapons which will destroy us all.

As Leninists, we know imperialism can only bring war and that nuclear weapons have not changed one iota the fact that war is the continuation of politics by violent means. We also recognise that the solutions to the problems facing the Soviet Union - inefficiency, lack of democracy, the threat of war lie in the victory of the working class on a world scale.

Gavin Kyle

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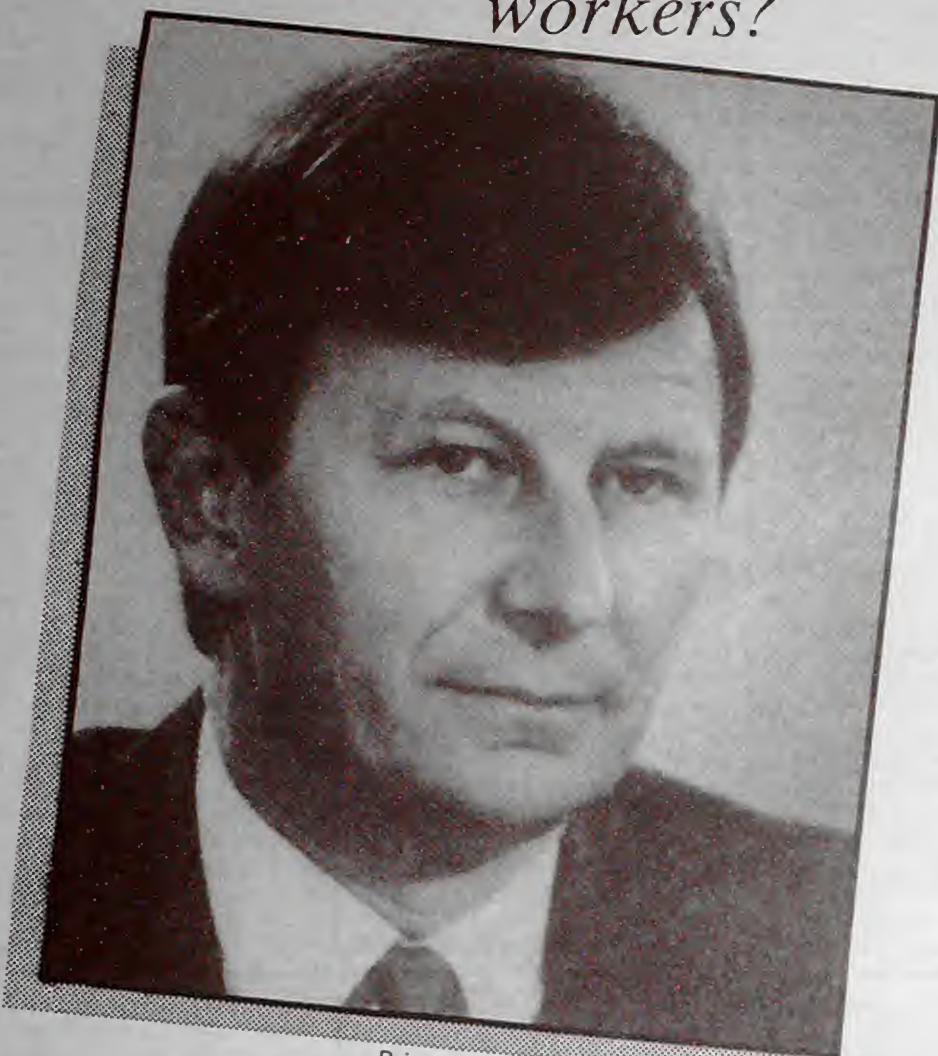
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The LENINIST

SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY

Will an assembly solve any of the problems confronting Scottish workers?



Brian Gould: marketing an assembly

Our Flag Stays Red

SCOTTISH workers have, like the rest of us, taken a battering since Thatcher got into Number 10 in 1979. Mines, mills, offices and factories have closed by the score. For workers, Scotland is not Ben Nevis and heather, it is slum housing, unemployment, declining services, pollution and poor health. And now Thatcher is lining up Scotland as the test bed for her anti-working class poll tax. How to fight back is the question on the lips of every militant worker in Scotland. The campaign for a Scottish assembly says it is the answer.

It is fast becoming a focus of attention for large sections of the left, although it has fallen firmly under the leadership of Labour leaders like Kinnock and Gould, with their Scottish clones staffing and running the show.

For the Labour Party the only ray of light to come out of the June election was in Scotland. Cynically and with utter opportunism Labour has played the separatist card against the Tories. We say Scottish workers should not trust Kinnock as far as they can throw him. He and his yuppie vote seeking party have betrayed the working class in every important battle we have fought, not least the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5. His call for Scottish devolution is equally treacherous. Yet like footsore camp followers, many leftists have trailed pliantly behind Kinnock, each scrambling for a place on the assembly bandwagon.

The eclectic *7 Days* has, of course, latched onto this

campaign, clutching it like a 'broad anti-Thatcherite' straw. It is a straw too; so far, all there has been is the 'Festival for Scottish Democracy' which only brought out a few thousand in Glasgow during September. Its saving grace was its platform speakers from the kirk, Greens, Labour ... and yes, even the Communist Party got a speaker.

This is just the thing to raise the hopes of our (rightly) despondent Euros: "for once all the Scots have agreed on something and rejected the values of greed and self interest. Fundamental to the Scottish psyche are values of equality and justice. To build these we need a devolved socialist parliament... we do need an assembly where purely Scottish problems can be given Scottish solutions." (*7 Days*, September 26) In other words, because they say Scotland is a nation, it should have its assembly to tackle its problems. This is how the 'creative Marxists' have justified their demand (request?) for an assembly. This might suit the Scottish nationalist 'psyche' but it has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism and working class politics.

Firstly, the notion that Scotland is a nation is built on thin ice. Secondly, even if it were the case that Scotland was a nation, then it would by no means logically follow that Marxists should advocate an assembly, let alone separation, on this basis alone. Let us put our case.

Nations develop from nationali-

ties along with the emergence of capitalism. They are historically evolved, stable communities with the common factors of language, territory, economy and culture. If we view Scotland in the light of these basic features we can see that Scotland might have once been a nation in itself but has evolved along with England and Wales to form a British nation.

Before the merger with England, capitalist power was embryonic in Scotland. Because of this we can say the Scottish nation was also embryonic. Capitalism developed in Scotland as an equal part of the British economy. This was not the case with Ireland. The 1801 Act of Union wrecked its industry. Unlike the capitalists of Dublin, those in Glasgow and Edinburgh exploited the British Empire along with their counterparts in London, Liverpool, Cardiff and Sheffield.

The development of capitalism merged Scotland, Wales and England into a British nation and created a British proletariat. It was natural and one hundred percent progressive for the British working class to develop political and economic organisations on an all-Britain basis.

So although there was and is a Scottish nationality there was never a fully developed Scottish nation (the same goes for England and Wales). Nevertheless this does not mean we ignore the rights of the Scottish nationality. We defend its right to become an independent nation. But defending a right and advocating the exercising

of this right are two entirely different things. Lenin, writing on the question, used the analogy of divorce. You support unequivocally the right to divorce, but this does not mean that you run around advocating that every couple split up. Divorce, like the separation of merged nationalities, is an emergency measure.

Communists stand for the fullest extension and flowering of democracy and culture in all nations and nationalities. Parliamentary democracy is a sham. A Scottish assembly will be transparently powerless. Scotland needs real democracy, the democracy that can only come with socialism and this can only be won when we have united the working class in Britain on the basis of communism and proletarian internationalism.

Because of this we fight to organise the working class in the largest possible units. We do after all aim for a World Union of Socialist Republics. In the meantime we settle for organising primarily on the basis of the existing state. Thus, Lenin fought to organise the Bolsheviks throughout the Russian empire, in Georgia, the Ukraine and Azerbaijan, not just within Russia itself. In concrete terms, in our case, Britain.

While we defend the right of the Scottish people not only to have their own assembly, but also to complete secession we cannot, however, advocate it. What we advocate is unity of all workers in Britain under the banner of a Leninist Communist Party.

Others on the left are not unaware of this Marxist-Leninist principle. Yet we have a whole spectrum of 'Marxist' groups supporting the assembly campaign and paying lip service to Lenin. The trick is to discover reasons why, in the particular case of Scotland, proletarian internationalism does not apply. *Militant* justifies its place among the 'Festival for Scottish Democracy' revellers because "Even on a capitalist basis, the achievement of a Scottish assembly with powers to deal with unemployment and poverty and to transform the Scottish economy in a socialist direction, would be a big step forward." (July 3)

It is indeed paradoxical that they find it so easy to support reactionary Scottish nationalism when they balk at showing anything but absolute horror for revolutionary Irish nationalists. This quote says far more about the parliamentary cretinism of the reformist *Militant* than it does of the hoped for revolutionary potential of a Scottish assembly.

If a capitalist assembly can eradicate unemployment and poverty, why has it not been done already? Why target Scotland for this grand treatment when you could go the whole hog and do it through Westminster? To expect a section of the bourgeois state - this 'capitalist assembly' - to introduce socialism is sheer fantasy. About as likely, in fact, as Liverpool doing it.

The SWP is a recent convert to the cause of the Scottish assembly. From opposition it has gone over to support because of its 'anti-capitalist' potential. *Socialist Worker* of September 5 says "Any chiselling away of the British state must be welcomed by socialists." In fact, weakening the power of the British bourgeoisie is best achieved by the united effort of the working class in Britain. But the SWP wants us to believe that somehow - god knows how - the establishment of a regional stratum of the British bourgeois state is supposed to 'chisel away' at the power of capitalism. This is absolute rubbish.

The campaign for a Scottish as-

sembly will more likely than not set worker against worker. Certainly the fight to establish a regional assembly, such as the Labour Party is proposing and the SWP is promoting in order to 'focus' on Scotland's problems is to sow illusions among Scottish workers in 'their own' state in a classically class collaborationist manner which blames Scottish problems on 'the English'.

Clearly the 'focus' the SWP has in mind is paper selling opportunities. Its stand has nothing to do with principles. The assembly is certainly not the focus anyone worthy of the name 'socialist' and 'communist' should be fighting for.

But 'focuses' there are aplenty. The problems of the working class in Scotland will only be solved through working class action across Britain. For instance, Catapillar, the struggles in the mines and, crucially at the moment, the coordination of resistance across Britain to the poll tax demand Britain-wide working class responses.

Anyone who thinks that the poll tax can be fought on the basis of Scottish separatism needs mental rather than political analysis. It is like falling into quicksand and refusing to pull yourself out by the arms on the grounds that it is, as yet, only a problem for your legs. The Scottish assembly can only be a diversion.

The Scottish revolutionary John Maclean until he succumbed to left nationalism at the end of his life hit out again and again at projects like the proposed assembly: "The establishment of a Scottish Babel... would be a retrograde step and should meet with our opposition and ridicule. What is good or bad for England is good or bad for Scotland." (*Justice*, July 27 1912)

Maclean was quite clear, and we must be as clear today: there are no such things as 'purely Scottish problems' that require 'Scottish solutions' for the working class. Neither are there long term 'British solutions'. The fight against the British state by the British proletariat is in itself only a component of the proletarian world revolution.

If the Scottish people had actively taken up the cause of Scottish secession, and this demand was being denied by the British state then communists in the rest of Britain would support the struggle to exercise the right to self determination by fighting for the overthrow of the British state which refuses to grant this elementary democratic demand. Not to do so would exacerbate a split within the working class, as Scottish workers would see English and Welsh workers as complicit in the denial of their rights, instead of as their champions.

But today the Scottish people are not fighting for separation. Time and time again workers in Scotland have been in the van of the British working class. This role would be brought to a tragic end if the nationalists had their way and customs posts were built at Gretna Green. Leninists stand against the Scottish assembly because it plays into the hands of separatists who aim to drag the working class in Scotland into the mire of nationalist class collaborationism.

We stand not under the Union Jack or the Cross of St Andrew but under the brilliant red banner of the working class, of communism. Our flag stays red.

Democracy will come through socialism! No alliance between workers and tartan Tories! No illusions in kirk nor assembly! Divided we will fall in Scotland, England and Wales, united we will win socialism throughout Britain.

Alan Merrik